STATES OF OUR UNION

TRIPURA

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ABOUT THE SERIES

This is the twenty-second book in the series "States of Our Union". The other books already released are on Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Tamil Nadu, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, Manipur, Karnataka, Pondicherry and Goa, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The object of the series is to promote greater awareness and understanding of different regions of the country.

The books seek to provide a factual account of the life, culture and economic development of our States and Union Territories and the contribution of each of them to India as a whole. They are addressed to the general reader and would thus serve as an introduction of a State or Territory to other parts of the country.

Photographs 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 8, 10, 11, and 13
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1. THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

A LAND MASS, in the shape of a cashew nut, lying in the extreme south west of Assam definitely attracts us whenever we cast our glance at the map of our country. And this small but beautiful land, studded with picturesque hills, green valleys and dense forests, is the State of Tripura.

Criss-crossed and skirted by successive hill ranges about a few kilometres apart from one another, and strewn with innumerable *cherras* and rivulets, it extends 183.5 kilometres from north to south and 112.7 kilometres from east to west.

The climate is generally moderate. The south-west monsoon causes plenty of rains from May to August. As a result, plants grow rapidly and abundantly making nature wear a green garment during the rainy season.

The normal rainfall is about 210 cm and the temperature generally ranges between 89°C and 42°C. Generally, July and August are the hottest months. The cold season normally starts from the first week of November and January is the coldest month.

The soil of Tripura is soft laterite in some areas of the hills and is virtually devoid of humus and in some cases it is hardly responsive even to chemical fertilisers. As the hill soil is loose and porous, it is favourable for horticulture and rubber and tea plantations. The soil consists of sand, silt and clay and has very little water absorption capacity.

HILLS

The six principal hill ranges of Tripura are : The Baramura, the Atharamura, Deotamura, Longtharai, Jampai and Sakhan. The highest peak Betling Sib is 960 metres above the sea level. From the peak one can experience an exhilarating sensation viewing range after range of blue hills receding far into the horizon.

Mainly in north and south run the hills of Tripura. The peculiarity is that the hills rise in a succession of ranges and grow higher and higher until they reach the main mountain mass in the east. In between the hills lie wide valleys—the flat lands of the State. The plain surface is often broken by intermittent hills. The low-lying lands in the north-western and southern boundaries of the State are comparatively fertile and hence densely populated.

RIVERS

The eight principal rivers emerging from the hill ranges cross into Bangladesh. They fall into two categories —north-flowing and west-flowing rivers. Of the north-flowing, the Juri, the Manu, the Dhalai and the Khowai flow through Dharmanagar, Kailashahar, Kamalpur and Khowai sub-divisions respectively and make the land fertile to some extent.

Emerging from Longtarai, Gumti or Gomati, the largest river flows westwards through three sub-division—Amarpur, Udaipur and Sonamura—and meets the river Meghna of Bangladesh. The beautiful Dumbur waterfalls lie at the source of the river Gumti.

The Howrah flows by Agartala and enriches the Sadar sub-division. Both the Howrah and the Mahari, the west-flowing rivers, cross into Bangladesh.

As most of the rivers have got their sources from the hill ranges they are, for a considerable length of their course, mountain torrents. During the non-monsoon period they appear small with dwindled flow but become furious in the rainy season. The flood water subsides as soon as the rains stop. Practically the flood does not continue for more than two or three days. The rivers are hardly navigable except for a few months during the rainy season and as such they serve as the waterways of the State for a few months of the year

POPULATION

Having 19th position among the States of the Union as regards population, Tripura holds within her total area of 10,477 sq. kilometres about 1,600,000 of people. The population as per the Census of 1971 was 1,556,345. This is more than double the population of 1951 (6,45,707). It shows a rapid increase in

population during the last two decades. The decinnial growth rate is 36.32 per cent whereas for India as a whole it is 24.57 per cent. The urban population constitutes 7.82 per cent (1971 Census) of the total population.

The density of population in Tripura is 149 per sq. km. as against 182 of the Indian Union as a whole. Among the sub-divisions, the Sadar sub-division has the highest density—*i.e.* 304 per sq. km —and Amarpur sub-division has the lowest—*i.e.* 58 persons per sq. km.

Three districts, namely, Tripura North, Tripura West and Tripura South, with their 10 sub-divisional headquarters and 4,932 villages within 177 Tehsils, together hold almost all the people of this hilly State. Of the six towns, only the capital, Agartala, with the population of more than 50,000 has got a municipality providing all the amenities. Five more towns having a population over 5,000 have been declared urban areas as per the criterion prescribed by the Registrar General of India.

Tripura is a multi-lingual, multi-racial and multi-religious State. It is inhabited by people belonging to numerous races, castes and creeds and religious beliefs. The people of Tripura feel proud of being Indians and stand united at the time of national emergency which was evidenced during the conflicts with China and Pakistan and specially during the freedom struggle of Bangladesh.

Although Tripura is a State with many languages and dialects, Bengali is spoken by the vast majority of the inhabitants and as such it has been accepted as the official language of the State.

Tribal languages, such as Tripuri, Reang, Chakma, Lusai. Garo, Kukie, Khasia, Bhutia, and other dialects are spoken by the different tribes and their sub-sections. The people of these tribes generally bear traits of the Mongoloid stock. Linguistically these tribes belong to two principal families of language, namely, Sino-Tibetan and Austric Group (Tibeto-Burmese). Their languages mostly belong to the Mongoloid race. Meithai and Visnupriya are also spoken by the people belonging to Manipuri community.

The plains are inhabited by the Bengalees and Manipuris and the hills and forests by the tribals who form nearly one-third of the total population of the State.

STRATEGIC LOCATION

The dominant feature of the State is that it is strategically situated between the river-valleys of Burma and Bangladesh. Encircled almost on three sides by Bangladesh, it is linked up with Assam only on the north-east. It has a border of 832 kilometres with Bangladesh.

The isolation of the State is not easy to overcome. The air connection which it has with West Bengal is also dependent on the mercy of fair weather. After the Partition of India the whole of the State was cut off from its natural hinterlands which became a foreign country, *i.e.* East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.

Although the State is isolated, it has great importance in regard to defence of the country. It serves as a constant sentinel on the eastern region against any outside aggression.

THE TRIBALS

In the midst of the hills and forests of Tripura, there live about nineteen tribal communities, who have a rich culture of their own and are proud of their heritage. These tribes are : the Lusai, Mogh, Kuki, Chakma, Garo, Chaimal, Halam, Khasia, Bhutia, Munda, Grang, Lepcha, Santal, Bhil, Tripuri or Tripura, Jamatia, Naotia, Reang and Uchai.

Most of the tribes, especially the Kukies, have several sub-tribes such as Balte, Belalhut, Chhalya and Fun-Hajango. When we think of the tribal people of the State, a romantic picture of their way of life comes to our mind. The anthropologists are of opinion that they differ from others only in their language, social systems and ways of life. But the distinction is vague in some ways, especially in occupation and religion

The tribals of Tripura have some unique characteristics. Isolated by nature they are conservative in their way of life. They prefer to live in inaccessible areas. Their simplicity and hospitality towards visitors are commendable. And, above all, most of them are democratic in their outlook.

Their villages are scattered over a wide area. The isolated villages along with the magnificent natural scenery of the hills have greatly influenced their character. The *Tong* type houses, five to six feet above the ground, are all made of bamboos, canes

and sungrass which are abundantly available in close proximity. The thatched huts on the hill top built to last for a few months are artistically constructed. Till recently there were nomadic groups of farmers who did not settle down in a particular place for long time. At present most of the tribes are being habituated to live in permanent settlements in small communities. Most tribes of Tripura have been living on Jhum or shifting cultivation for centuries. This being a wasteful and uneconomic method of cultivation, they are now being persuaded to adopt a settled way of life. Unlike the cultivators of the plains, the Jhumias do not use the same plot of land to grow crops for all times. The same plot of land is used not more than two or three times and then left fallow for several years to recuperate. In addition to their daily requirements of rice and vegetables, they grow cotton, oilseeds, etc., in the Jhum fields and barter their produce within the village. They were almost self-sufficient and had hardly any contact with the world outside. Now they have started purchases of good quality salt, tea, sugar, kerosene oil, yarn, millmade cloth and dry fish and even radios from the nearest markets. Their isolated nature kept them away so long from the mainstream of modern economic living

TRIBAL CUSTOMS

As regards their domestic life, customs and beliefs, although a common pattern runs through all the hill tribes, there are of course local variations. Apart from hard work both men and women immensely enjoy seeking relaxation and recreation in drinking, singing, dancing and feasting, which are common to all tribes, but each has its own peculiarities. Drinking of country liquor prepared by themselves is widely prevalent amongst all the tribes. Drinking, dancing and merry-making are part and parcel of marriage and other festivities.

Marriage system and laws of inheritance differ from tribe to tribe. Most of the tribes have retained their own marriage systems and their matrimonial relations have been generally restricted within their local groups. In some of the tribes, the old custom was that the husband, before marriage, was to live in his would be wife's house at least for three years to satisfy his father-in-law and mother-in-law by his daily work and prove his worth. During this period the groom was required to learn about essential rituals, customs and ceremonies. This custom is thought to be holy for the society and it is still observed in relaxed

ways. Heavy fine is imposed upon the parents of the absconder groom and even the expenditure for divorce is realised from them. Otherwise the dispute can be settled by cross-marriage, *i e.* wife's brother can marry the sister of the husband. Among other social customs, parallel cousin marriage is prevalent in most of the tribes. Bride price is customary in all tribes. It is given in cash or kind. Child marriage is prevalent in a very few tribes. Divorce involves loss by repayment of marriage price but it is not difficult to obtain. It often takes place by mutual consent. The village elders may order dissolution of the marriage by consent of either of the two partners when necessary. Birth and death are followed by religious ceremonies, offerings to spirits and drinking

Excepting some local variations in religious practices, the animistic religion of the hill tribes has common features with popular Hinduism. Offerings and sacrifices to be made for warding off evil and calamities are prescribed and are performed by the priest or sorcerer who is called 'Wajhai'. They all believe in the existence of a Supreme Being and in the rebirth of the soul. From their beliefs and practices it is assumed that the *Tantric* form of Hinduism greatly influenced the tribal religions of the State.

The most remarkable feature of tribal life is that the basis of their social and administrative organisation is fundamentally democratic. In their society there is no distinction between the high and the low, the rich and the poor. A commoner can be the chief of the society Most of the tribes have a council of elders who exercise temporal authority over the people of the tribe in their social affairs. The elders are respected by all alike.

The chief of the elders of the Reang communities is called *Ray* and in some other communities *Choudhury*. In performing his duties as a chief, he is helped by one priest, one clerk, one drum beater, one flute player and store keeper.

Among the pujas and festivals, the Ganga Puja, Garia Puja, Ker Puja and Kharchi Puja are popular and sacrifices of goats, buffaloes, cocks and ganders in these Pujas are prevalent amongst the tribal people.

The tribal women are very fond of ornaments such as broad solid bangles, hair-pins, nose-pins, ear-rings, necklaces, combs. made of silver and bronze. The decorative details of the tribal jewellery reflect good craftsmanship.

The excellence of tribal dances is well known throughout India. They are graceful and original in character and depiction.

In modern times most of the tribal communities, through association with others, are losing their tribal characteristics of the past and their age-old customs and rituals are changing day by day.

2. A PEEP INTO THE PAST

THE GLORIOUS NAME of Tripura, once the land of the Kiratas (hunting tribes) is not only borne by our great Epic, the *Mahabharata,* but also by the *Puranas,* the *Brihat Sanghita* and the stone pillar inscriptions of the Emperor Asoka. Although the rulers of Tripura claim their descent from king Druhya, the youngest son of Yayati, the mythical ruler of the lunar race, their early history is clouded in romance and mystery. It is said that the Rajasuya sacrifice of king Yudhisthira was attended by king Trilochana of this dynasty. Whatever be the origin of this state, it claims to be the most ancient of all the princely states of India.

The name Tripura had originated from the name of king Tripur who was a terror to his subjects. Another theory is that the Lord Tripurari Shiva had been worshipped by the people of this region and they gave it his name.

According to the traditional sources prince Druhya, having been exiled by his father, defeated and overthrew the king of the Kiratas and set up his capital at Tribeg on the bank of the river Kapil in Assam. According to another version, it was near Sonargaon of Bangladesh. The present Chittagong of Bangladesh was not far away from that place.

A LONG LINE OF KINGS

Druhya was succeeded by his son Vavru who was conferred the title "King" by the great sage Kapila with due ceremony and the proud title has ever since been assumed by the successive rulers of the line. They later ruled from the capitals, Khalangma and Shyambal, or in north Cachar and later on moved south to Tripura to rule here for more than 1300 years. This Kiratadesh was gradually peopled by the immigrants belonging to Kukie, Mogh, Reang, Garo, Lusai, Khasia and their sub-tribes. There were wave after wave of these migrations and the immigrants belonged to the Indo-Chinese linguistic family of which the Tibeto-Burman branch became the dominant.

A clear historical picture of Tripura is not available. The *Rajmala* on the chronicles of the kings of Tripura bears some

of the records of the ruling family of Tripura during the traditional period. *Rajmala* says that king Daitya, the descendent of Bavru, conquered Assam and recovered the lost territories of his father. Daitya's successor, king Tripura, was killed because of tyranny. His son Trilochana was a pious ruler who brought the fourteen gods and installed them in Tripura.

We now enter the historical period. According to *Rajmala*, the rulers of Tripura did not assume the title of kings in the past, but were known by the surname 'Fa' meaning 'father'. Ratna Fa was a contemporary of Sultan-Moghisudin of Bengal. Ratna Fa had to flee from the state and took asylum in the court of the ruler of Gour (Bengal) who helped him to regain the throne of Tripura (1364). The Sultan of Gour was highly pleased with the charming manners and uncommon intelligence of the refugee prince. In gratitude, Ratna Fa presented the king of Gour with a valuable ruby (Manikya) along with 100 elephants. In return the king of Gour conferred the title of 'Manikya' upon Ratna Fa and this title was borne by the rulers of Tripura ever since.

The next famous king of Tripura dynasty was Dharma Manikya (1431-1462). As a great patron of arts and literature he engaged some scholars for compiling the *Rajmala* in Bengali verse and made a large number of Maithili Brahmins settle in his realm. The next king Dhanya Manikya (1463—1515) helped the spread of Bengali language and culture in his kingdom. He conquered Meherkul, Patikera, Ganga-mandal, Bhanugach, Langla, Khandal Pargana and the Kuku land. King Bijoy Manikya (1528–70) was another king of this dynasty marked in history by his conquests. He was a contemporary of Emperor Akbar. So also was Amar Manikya (1499) who is described in the contemporary history as a great king. In fact, Tripura's power and prestige in the Indian history was the highest in the sixteenth century.

The dates given so far have been taken from *Rajmala*. But it should be mentioned here that with the recent new discoveries of old coins of Tripura which are being noticed by the modern historians, the dates from Ratna Manikya to Bijoy Manikya, in some cases, are yet to be thoroughly scrutinised and correctly fixed.

The kings of Tripura had to face frequent Mughul invasions with varying successes. They defeated the Mohammedan Sultans of neighbouring Bengal in several battles They somehow re-

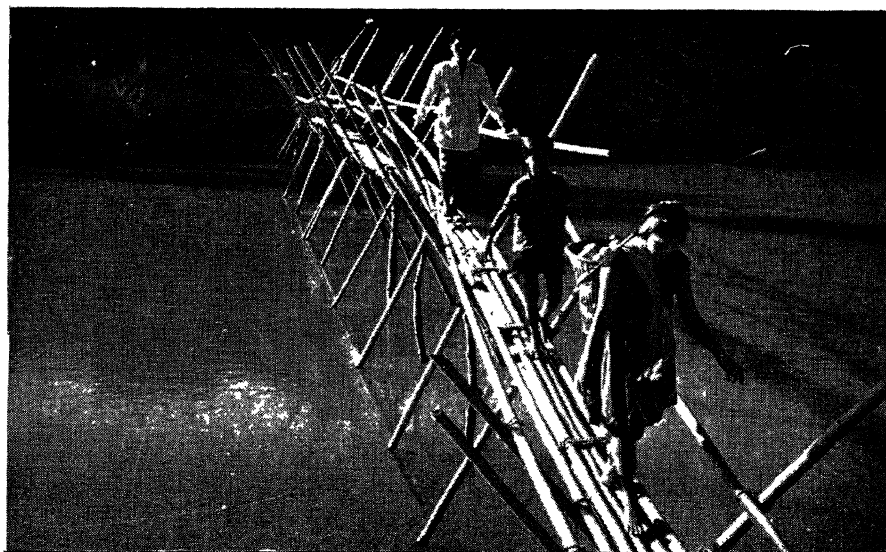
tained the independence of their kingdom which for sometime shrank considerably and definitely started waning from early eighteenth century.

The modern era began practically from the time of Maharaja Birchandra Manikya Bahadur (1862—1896). He remodelled the administrative set-up of the State after the British Indian pattern and abolished slavery and *suttee*. He was also a linguist and a musician. He composed hundreds of songs and verses in Brajabuti and Bengali.

His son Maharaj Radhakishore Manikya Bahadur (1897–1909) was a close friend of Rabindra Nath Tagore. It was his financial assistance that largely helped Tagore in setting up the Santiniketan Brahmacharya Vidyalaya and Viswabharati He founded many educational institutions and the present Victoria Memorial Hospital of Agartala. His son, Birendra Kishore Manikya Bahadur, reigned during 1909—1923. After him, his son, Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, succeeded to the throne in 1923 at the age of 14 only. He was not only a popular ruler but a versatile genius endowed with great foresight. For the all-round educational development of Tripura, he made a master plan known as "the Vidya Pattan Plan" which included colleges for arts, science, agriculture, technology, medicine, physical culture and fine arts. But he breathed his last before the fulfilment of his dream. The college initiated by him is named after him—Maharaj Bir Bikram College. This noble-minded ruler passed away on May 17, 1947. Before his death he decided to accede Tripura to the Indian Union and accordingly the state was merged with India on October 15, 1949. His son, Maharaj Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, the 179th ruler of the Tripura dynasty ceded his rights as Ruler. In the fourth general election in 1967 he was elected with an overwhelming majority as a member of the Lok Sabha.

Although Tripura was not directly involved in the freedom struggle of the country, it had indirectly helped the freedom movement by giving shelter to some political leaders of British India during the freedom struggle. The maharajas also contributed to the establishment of some national institutions in the country. Most of the leaders who were involved in the famous Armoury Raid of Chittagong took shelter in this state to escape

1 *Tripura is a small but beautiful and picturesque place A picnic spot near Agartala*

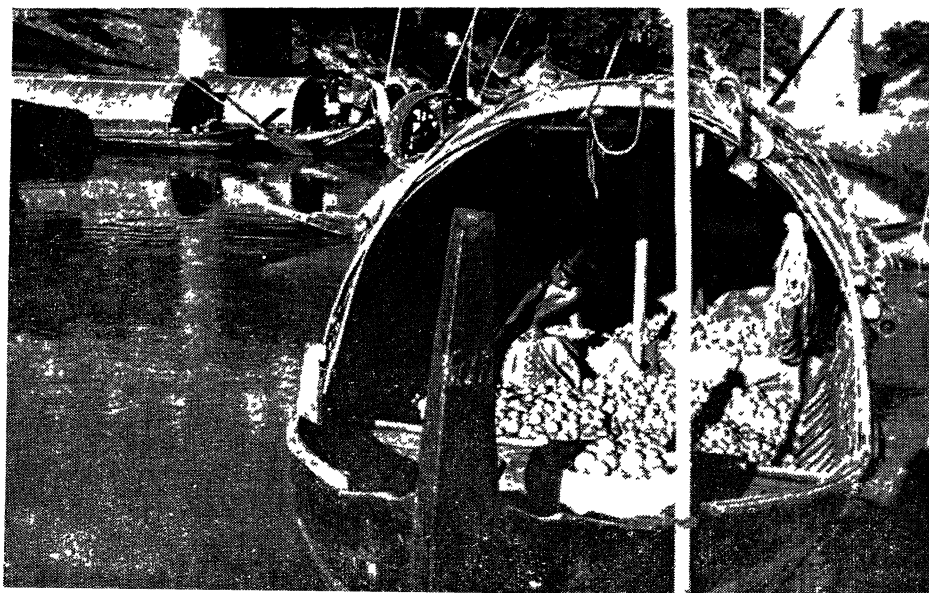
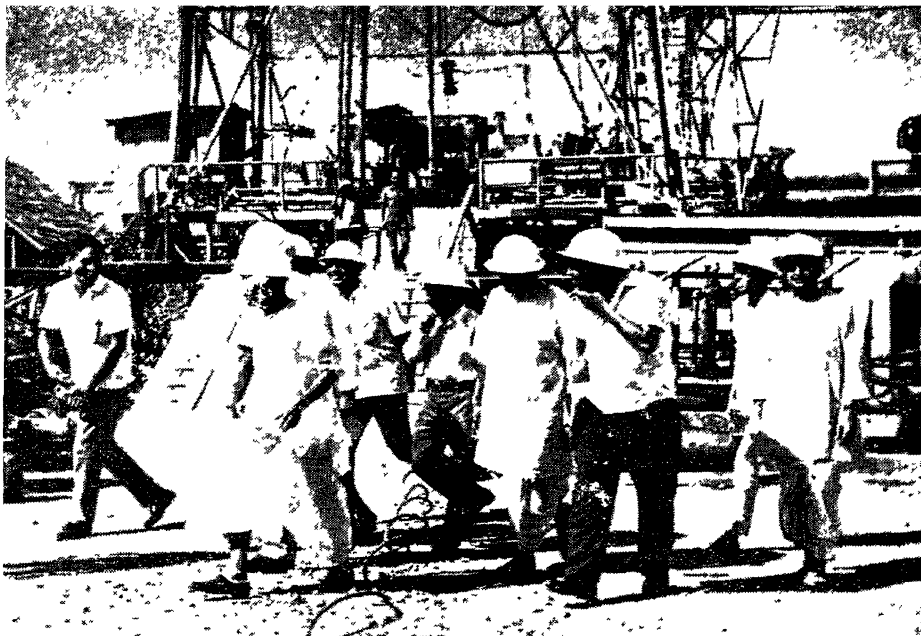
2 *A typical bamboo bridge over Longai river*

3. *A market scene, Agartala*

4. *Worship of fourteen gods at old Agartala, the famous week-long festival in Tripura*

5. *An election scene at Agartala. A long queue of women voters*

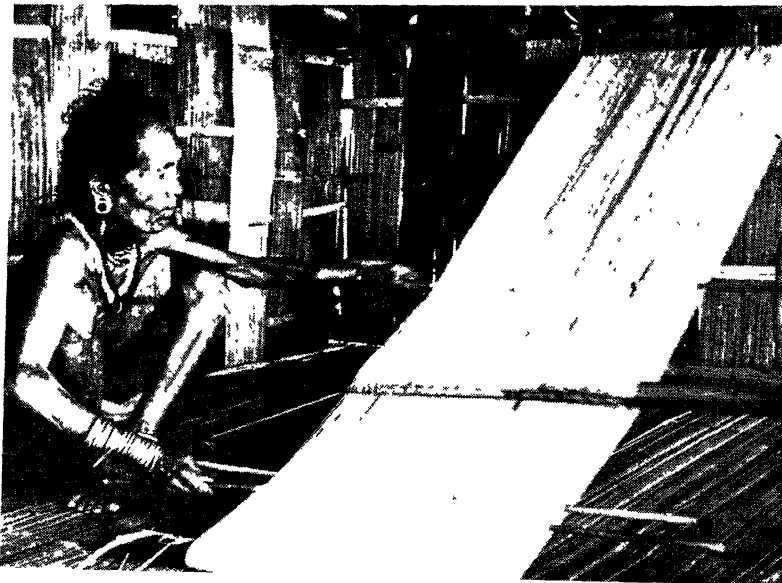
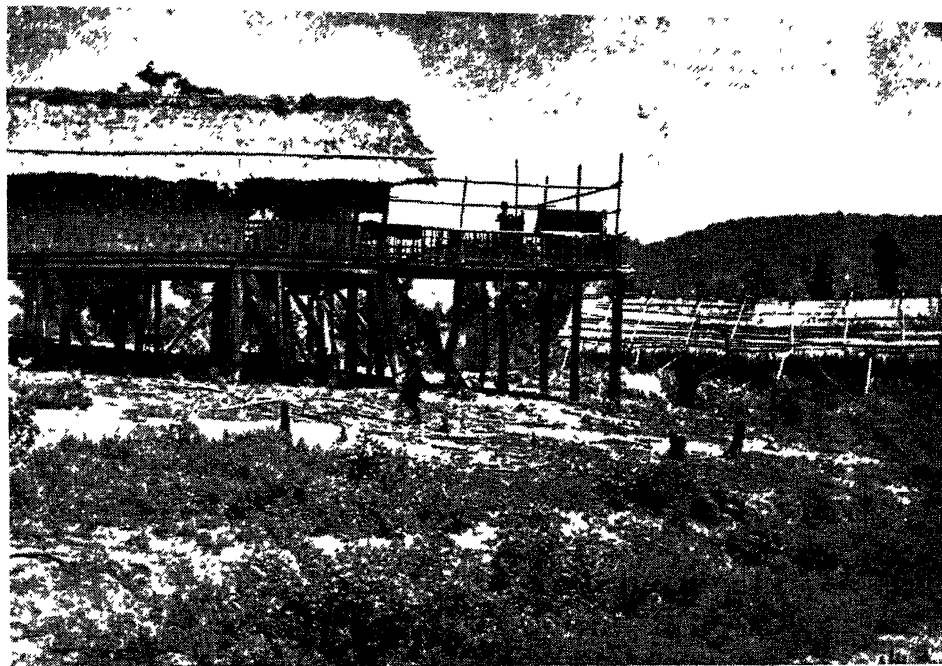
6 *Tripura being mainly a hillystate, the tribal people there are in the habit of Jhum (Shifting) cultivation on hill slopes.*

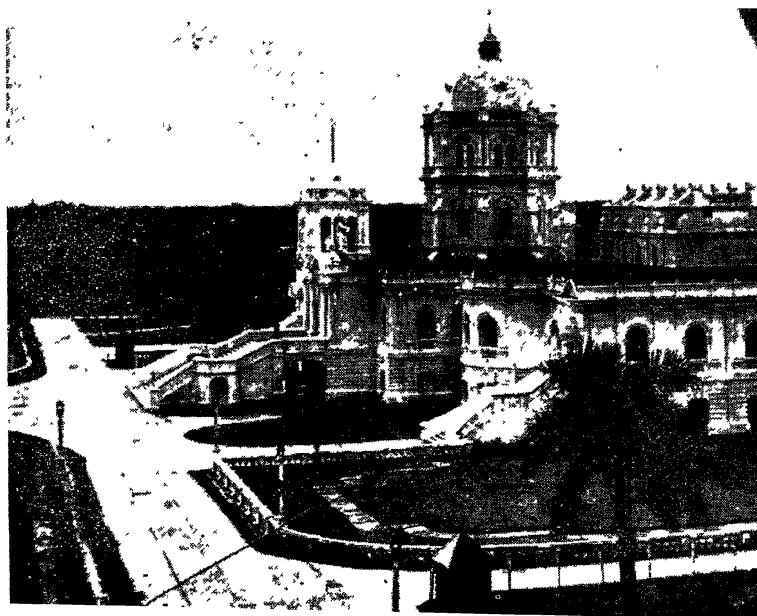
7 *The soil of Tripura is suitable for growing tropical fruits like pine apple and orange. A happy harvest of pine apple in a Darlong village near Kumarghat.*

8 *Orange is an important commercial crop of Tripura Picture shows Oranges being transported in boats*

9 *O. N. G. C drilling site Baramura*

10 *Reang tribal girls carrying water*

11 *Reang tribe is one of the important tribes Picture shows a Reang family husking paddy in the traditional way*

12 *Most of the tribal women are adept at weaving and have taken to modern designs*

13 *A typical 'Tong' type house in a tribal village. The house built five to six feet above the ground is made up of bamboos*

14 *The Ujjayanta Palace, Agartala*

arrest by the then Government of India. The political leaders of the state also had some share in national service under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

In the annals of the Indian Freedom Movement the humble contribution of Tripura will also be duly assessed along with that of other princely states.

POPULAR MOVEMENT

A section of the people of Tripura started political activities early in the thirties under the auspices of 'Bharati Sangha'. With the formation of the Ganaparishad in 1936 the demand for responsible government in Tripura became vocal to some extent. The Tripura Rajya Jana Siksha Samity was organised in 1945 to spread mass education for awakening the common people. The Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal emerged in 1946, demanding the establishment of a popular government in the State. The Tripura Rajya Praja Mandal attended the All-India State People's Conference at Gwalior. The State Congress was formed in 1946. The Congress was formerly working in the form of Tripura Rajya Gana Parishad. A group of Congress workers are said to have met Gandhiji at Noakhali (now in Bangladesh) to receive his advice.

It should, however, be mentioned that long before these political activities were gaining ground in the State its progressive Ruler, by his Act 1 of 1941, announced the introduction of reforms in the administrative and constitutional set-up of Tripura which included the provision of an elected legislature. But some of the important provisions of the reforms could not take shape due to World War II and Tripura subsequently merged with the Indian Union in 1949.

After the merger with the Indian Union the State began to march towards democracy and development. Tripura became a Part 'C' state under the administration of a Chief Commissioner on behalf of the President of India. After the first general elections, three advisors were appointed by the President to aid and advise the Chief Commissioner in the discharge of his duties.

The people of Tripura have accepted the social values of the new era without hesitation. With the re-organisation of the

States in 1956, Tripura became a centrally-administered Territory and the advisory regime came to an end in 1957. A Territorial Council with 32 members was formed after the Second General Election. During this period there was some sort of a diarchical government in Tripura. The first popular ministry of Tripura and the Tripura Legislative Assembly were formed on 1 July, 1963. It was a memorable day in the history of Tripura. The first ministry consisted of two Ministers and three Deputy Ministers including the Chief Minister.

The administration of Lieutenant-Governor was introduced on January 31, 1970. On January 21, 1972, this territory attained the status of a full-fledged State along with Manipur and Meghalaya.

3. AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED FIELDS

IN SPITE OF being a hilly state Tripura has some areas of fertile and cultivable land. Some lands are very fertile giving three crops a year but in some other areas soil is found non-responsive even to chemical fertilisers. In spite of such handicaps, about seventy per cent of the people depend for their livelihood on agriculture.

The tribal people were in the habit of Jhum (shifting) cultivation on hill slopes with their traditional appliances and the people of the plains were adopting settled cultivation. The agriculturists are now getting themselves acquainted with improved techniques of cultivation. The use of modern agricultural appliances, chemical fertilisers, improved seeds, management of irrigation, chemicals to kill pests and diseases is gradually increasing.

As a result of efforts made to increase agricultural production 382,000 hectares of land had come under cultivation by 1975-76.

MODERNISATION

The present features of agricultural production are extensive cultivation of high yielding varieties in the areas of assured irrigation, multiple cropping, increasing productivity through the extensive use of fertilisers, increased use of plant protection measures and extension of cultivable land by reclamation.

High-yielding varieties of rice *viz.* IR-8, Taichung Native-1, Monohar Sail, Jaya, Padma and Hausa have gained popularity and the varieties like IR-20, Jamuna, Sabarmati and Jagannath are under trial in the Government Agricultural Farm at Arundhutinagar.

As the uneven distribution of rainfall is not helpful, the new irrigation facilities have brought about a rapid change in agriculture in the State. Several schemes of minor irrigation, such as diversion, reclamation, drainage, tube-well, well, lift irrigation, were taken up under minor irrigation projects. The total area under irrigation rose from 81 hectares in 1955-56 to 33,800 hectares in 1976-77. Cultivators are being supplied with small pumping sets of 3 H.P. and 5 H.P. at 50 per cent subsidy.

Power tillers are also becoming popular among the farmers. Four Machinery Hiring Centres have been set up for lending out power tillers, pumping sets and tractors, to the agriculturists on a nominal rent.

Various programmes for soil conservation such as bench terracing, graded bunding, reclamation and development of Lunga lands and water-logged areas have increased agricultural production.

COMMERCIAL CROPS

Jute, potato, cotton, sugarcane and oilseeds are important commercial crops of Tripura. Cotton is still grown as Jhum crop. Long staple varieties such as MCU-4 and MCU-5 are gradually gaining popularity. Cultivation of sugarcane and oil seeds on *Tilla* lands is encouraged among the farmers. New varieties of seeds of different commercial crops are distributed among the agriculturists at 50 per cent subsidy. Upto 1976-77 about 33,000 hectares of land had come under cultivation of commercial crops.

HORTICULTURE

The soil of Tripura is suitable for growing tropical fruits like cashewnut, jack fruit, pineapple, *lichi,* guava, lemon and organe. More and more *Tilla* lands are being brought under fruit cultivation. Seven progeny orchards have been set up for supplying planting materials to the people at subsidised rates Tripura has two fruit canning centres at Agartala

Agriculture plays a vital role in the economy of Tripura. Before accession to the Indian Union, Tripura was self-sufficient in food production. But later in spite of an enormous increase in production of rice the State has not been self-sufficient in food. This is due to an abnormal increase in population, by natural growth and influx of refugees from the then East Pakistan. Food production in 1955-56 was 1.37 lakh tonnes; in 1968-69 it became 2.19 lakh tonnes and in 1969-70, 2.34 lakh tonnes. During the year 1976-77 the production of rice was 3,41,000 metric tonnes and of wheat was 9,000 metric tonnes.

FISHERY

Water areas for fishery are very limited in Tripura. Pisciculture is limited to ponds, tanks and water-logged areas of valleys.

The Government has set up two fish breeding farms, one at Agartala and another at Udaipur. Two more units of fish breeding farms are under construction. Schemes have been taken up for reclamation and development of water areas with government assistance for the production of fish and distribution of fish feed.

The annual demand in the State for edible fish is estimated to be 12,000 metric tonnes and the present production is 4,500 metric tonnes. Schemes were taken up to increase the production of fish. After completion of Gumti Reservoir Project an additional area of 3,000 hectares is expected to come under fishery.

FORESTS

The forests have been the main source of revenue of the State. About 60 per cent of the total area of land consists of hills and dales and the remaining 40 per cent is flat land. Out of 1,045,100 hectares of land 635,252 hectares are forest and *Tilla* lands. Once the State was very rich in forest wealth. But because of shifting cultivation, rehabilitation of refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and encroachment on forest land, the forest wealth was excessively destroyed

Among the forest produces various types of timbers, bamboo, cane, cash crops, medicinal herbs, rawulfia, pepper, fuel wood are very important. The forests of the State abound in wild animals like elephant, tiger, monkey, bear, boar, deer, porcupine, wild dogs and poisonous snakes like python, cobra and krait. These wild animals and reptiles are generally found in the hill ranges.

For the improvement of the forest wealth a programme of afforestation has been greatly emphasised by the Government. During the First Plan period 585 hectares of plantations were created which increased to over 1,639 hectares during the Second Plan period. At the end of the Third Plan period plantations were raised over an area of 11,876 hectares, and in the Fourth Plan it was proposed to create an additional area of 4,350 hectares of plantations of which a substantial part were to be put under teak wood.

Eighteen schemes were taken up by the Government for implementation during the Fourth Plan. Some of the important schemes were : fuel wood plantation, forest commmunication,

rehabilitation of degraded forests, plantation for industrial and commercial uses, timber operation and logging, conservation of nature and wild life, forest protection and development of minor forest produces, and a centrally-sponsored scheme for the survey of forest resources. Under the centrally-sponsored scheme 1,047 hectares were planted up with fast-growing species against the target of 2,437 hectares. Under soil conservation scheme 425 hectares of old *Jhum* areas and 2,787 hectares of degraded forest areas were brought under the forest cover. At the end of the Fourth Plan valuable plantations of teak, *sal, gamar, chamal*, eucalyptus, bamboo, cashewnut, etc, covered about 35,000 hectares.

The soil of Tripura is suitable for growing good quality rubber trees. Fifty-two hectares of rubber plantation set up in the Third Plan period was raised to 256 hectares by the end of the year 1971. By 1977-78 the area under rubber plantation had increased to about 950 hectares. It is expected that large-scale plantation of rubber can change the economy of the State. It is also possible to grow other cash and economic crops like black pepper, ginger, turmeric, grasses yielding essential oils, palms, coffee, cocoa, clove and important medicinal plants like *Sarpagandha* and *Chalmugra*.

The State has now a well-established Foresters' Training School and a Forest Guards' Training School. The rangers and officers are being trained at Dehra Dun and Coimbatore for the management of the forest department.

COOPERATIVES

The growth of cooperative movement in Tripura has been very slow and halting. Various factors, such as lack of leadership, alienation of the cultivator from land, inadequate provisions in the Act in force, rigidity of rules and lack of efficiency in management are responsible for the slow growth. For the advancing of loans, development of rural credit and marketing of local produce, organisations like the Tripura State Cooperative Bank, the Land Mortgage Bank, wholesale consumers stores, primary marketing societies at Block level and the Apex Marketing Society at the top were established.

The Tripura State Cooperative Bank Ltd., with its five branches, provides the cooperative societies with short and

medium term loans and other banking facilities. By 1976-77 the total amount of short and medium term loans advanced by the Bank amounted to Rs. 95,71,000.

The Cooperative Land Mortgage Bank, which was established in 1960, advances long-term credit to the people for land improvement, redemption of previous debts, minor irrigation, purchase of land, construction of buildings and roads.

The State has 417 Agricultural Credit Societies which supply seeds, manures and credit to its members but the credit structure at the primary level is not adequate to meet the demand of the agriculturists.

One Apex Marketing Society at the top and fourteen marketing societies at the Block level marketed goods worth Rs. 59,24,000 during the year 1969-70. Upto 1977 sixty-nine Primary Consumers' Cooperative Stores were organised in Tripura for distribution of essential commodities.

The handloom weavers cooperative societies numbering 68 and Khadi and other village cooperative societies numbering 82 sell their finished products through the marketing societies. Moreover three agricultural and 25 non-agricultural societies have been functioning in the villages and towns. Consumers cooperatives have sprung up in the urban areas and by 1977, there were 70 such societies in the State. The wholesale consumers stores and ten primary stores organised under a centrally-sponsored scheme continued to function satisfactorily. Under the training scheme, subsidised by the Government, the Tripura State Cooperative Union imparted training to 121 office-bearers and 668 members of 281 managing committees. Much importance is attached to cooperative training and education.

The number of various cooperative societies including primary societies had reached 795 by the year 1977. One main difficulty, however, is the inadequate arrangements for agricultural credit. Efforts are being made to revitalise and reorganise the cooperative department and also to explore other ways and means for providing cheap credit to the farmers.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Tripura is essentially a rural State; it has 5,286 villages. The rural economy is sought to be developed through various schemes for agriculture, animal husbandry, minor irrigation and land

reclamation, rural health and sanitation and utilisation of rural man power. The Community Development Programme has been of much help in implementing these schemes. The State is now covered by 17 Blocks, of which 12 are Community Development Blocks, four are Tribal Development Blocks and one is a Multipurpose Block All these cover a total population of 15,56,345 persons (1971 Census). Village roads for improving communication, tube wells, bunds are constructed by the Block authorities in remote rural and tribal areas. The villagers are busy in other developmental activities during the lean periods Every inch of cultivable land is utilised by the farmers who are provided with seeds, pumps for irrigation, fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides by the Development Blocks. Loans to the tune of Rs. 10.206 lakhs were given to the people belonging to low income groups for construction of houses An expenditure of Rs. 15.93 lakhs in the First Plan, Rs. 50.10 lakhs in the Second Plan and Rs 89.17 lakhs in the Third Plan was incurred for community development schemes. During 1976-77 the expenditure incurred on Community Development Schemes including rural water supply was Rs. 37.23 lakhs.

PANCHAYAT RAJ

The Tripura Panchayat Raj Rules were framed under the Panchayat Raj Act of 1947 of Uttar Pradesh. With a view to democratise the administration from the base, 476 *Gaon Panchayats* and 138 *Nyaya Panchayats* have been constituted. More than two thousand five hundred meetings of the *Gaon Panchayats* were held in 1976-77. The Panchayat Raj bodies are entrusted with the responsibility of executing various projects such as horticulture, pisciculture, creation of village funds by raising taxes, distribution of *khas* land, etc. *Gaon Panchayats* were given financial aid of Rs. 35,500 for the development of horticulture and that of Rs. 26,500 for the development of pisciculture upto 1976-77. The number of trained Pradhans and Up-Pradhans was 459 and that of Secretaries was 465.

4. INDUSTRY AND POWER

NATURAL WEALTH IS the life-blood of industry. The hilly State of Tripura is endowed with many natural resources. But as these remain unexploited Tripura has been the most backward State in the country with regard to industrialisation. The peculiar geographical location, inadequate transport and communication facilities and lack of cheap power supply have thwarted the growth of any big manufacturing industry or ancillary industry.

Before the merger of the State with the Indian Union only a few industrial units with less than a thousand employees were in operation. Of course traditional handicrafts involving a very high degree of skill existed with the patronage of the royal families. To restore the pristine glory of the arts and handicrafts of Tripura and for the development of small and cottage industries various programmes were taken up by the Directorate of Industries during the successive Plans, Industrial estates were established and training facilities in rural and urban areas were offered to the trainees by opening many industrial institutes and training centres in the State.

SMALL AND COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

In 1965-66 there were 49 groups of small industries in Tripura and the total number of units in all groups was 3,695 of which 40 units were in the co-operative sector. The total capital investment was Rs. 1,43,50,940 and about 13,626 workers were employed in the small scale and village industries of the State. The average annual output was worth about Rs. 2,40,46,513. By 1976 the total number of registered industrial units was 791 and 3,245 workers were employed in these units. The total production was worth Rs. 2,76,72,489.

Handloom, pottery, *bidi*-making, brick kiln, carpentry, blacksmithy, oil *ghani,* jewellery, cane and bamboo works, handicrafts, soap manufacturing, aluminium and utensils manufacturing are some of the cottage and small industries in the State. The industrial estates at Udaipur and Agartala manufacture

aluminium utensils, safety matches, spray paints, leather works and wooden and steel furniture worth Rs. 1,700,000 a year. The Tripura Small Industries Corporation Ltd., which has been sponsored as a Government company, has undertaken production programmes and procurement of raw materials for different industries of the State. Efforts are being made for development of powerloom industry with sizing, calendering and dyeing plants.

For implementation of the programme of sericulture four demonstration centres have been set up at Champaknagar, Santirbazar, Karam Cherra and Bisram Ganj. Two industrial training institutes for training of the craftsmen, with an intake capacity of 508 trainees, have been set up. Besides, a centrally-sponsored scheme, namely, Rural Industries Project, is under implementation in North Tripura district for intensive development of rural industries.

Upto the period of the Third Plan no large and medium industry was set up in the State. There is scope in Tripura for setting up chemical and agro-industries for which raw materials such as limestone, clay, bamboo, jute, cotton seeds, oil seeds, sugarcane, etc., are sufficiently available in the State. At present attempts are being made to set up new industries like sodium silicate, tile, paints and varnishes, crockeries, electrical porceline, jute twine, phynile, etc. One paper mill with a production capacity of 100 tonnes per day is being set up. Establishment of a jute spinning mill is also under active consideration of the Government.

The most important mineral deposits in Tripura are oil, gas and limestone. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission has undertaken drilling for oil at Baramura in the West district. It is hoped that a vigorous drive of drilling operations will yield sufficient gas and oil. In the near future petro-chemicals based on petroleum products and natural gas might play an important role in Tripura's development.

The tea industry of Tripura which has acquired the fifth place in India has made remarkable progress in its production. Tripura has 55 tea gardens with an area of 5,500 hectares under plantation and an average production of 27,74,718 kg per year. This industry employs a large number of persons.

Attempts are being made by the Government for establishment of large scale industry by granting 10 per cent subsidy in

investment, and for the development of cottage, medium and small industries for the overall economic regeneration of the State.

HANDICRAFTS

The handicrafts of Tripura have earned a great reputation in the country and abroad because of their superb craftsmanship, variety and exquisite beauty.

One wonders how such artistic creations of refined taste are made of cane, bamboo and bamboo-roots unless and until one visits the State exhibition that is generally held in January every year. The artistic gifts of veteran masters are skilfully lavished on toy, tray, vase, photograme, human figure in different moods, casket calendar, penstand, armchair, easy-chair, *moda,* shelf, basket, lampstand, lampshade and many other articles of decoration.

The Tipra textiles of Tripura occupy the pride of place for their colourful variety and texture. Most of the tribal women are capable of weaving any design to suit the modern taste. The Tipra textiles in coloured silk and cotton, especially the gold and silver embroidered silk *riyah* (narrow breast covers) are elegant and distinctive in quality which have made Tripura famous Manipuris are past masters in weaving wrappers, dubris (a piece of skirt to be wrapped twice over body), bed covers and Asanas (known as 'Padi' among the Kukie tribe) are the noted varieties of Tipra textiles.

POWER

The only private company which existed at Agartala to supply power during the pre-Plan period, has now been replaced by the Electricity Wing of Tripura P.W.D. Eight power generating stations with a capacity of 15.98 M.W. are functioning in the State.

Dambur, the first Hydroelectric Project of the State with a generating capacity of 10 M.W., the installation of 2×630 K.W. Russian diesel generating sets and 6×100 K.W. new diesel generating sets at Agartala and the Bulk Supply Scheme from Assam are going to be completed very soon. There is a proposal for setting up a Thermal Power Project near Kalyanpur, Khowai by using gas which will be available from Baramura. The proposal at present is to set up a plant of 10 M.W. capacity

with provision to increase it later upto 30 M.W. These schemes will enable unrestricted and cheap power supply for domestic industries and irrigation purposes which would better the economic condition of the State

5. TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATION

BEING A HILLY State, Tripura still lags far behind in respect of transport and communication. The problem was far more acute prior to Independence. Besides a few jeeps, motor cars and boats, elephants were used as means of transportation within the State. The internal road facilities were totally inadequate. Although the State had no railways, it derived the benefit of Assam-Bengal Railway (now in Bangladesh) running close to the borders.

ROADS

Soon after the integration of the State, internal communication was greatly improved. The total road construction was 6,501 km at the end of 1976 in addition to the municipal roads. Now road is the most widely used means of communication in the State. The capital town Agartala has been connected by the 198 km Assam-Agartala road, the only National Highway in the State. The maintenance of roads has been taken over by the Central Govrenment The Agartala-Udaipur-Subroom road which is called the State Highway is the main trunk road of the State. These are the lifelines of transportation in Tripura.

The major district roads have connected sub-divisional towns with the highways. Besides the highways, the following district roads were constructed after integration : Dharmanagar to Kailashahar, Kamalpur to Dalubari, Khowai to Teliamura, Teliamura to Ampi, Harishnagar to Madhupur Bazar, Agartala to Ananda Bazar, Kala Cherra to Khowai via Padmabil, Ambassa to Bagafa, Peari Cherra to Churaibari, Dharmanagar to Tilthai, Kumarghat to Kanchanpur and Amarpur to Udaipur. There are several other district roads and village roads scattered in the rural areas.

RAILWAYS

Although the roadways cater to a large part of the transport requirement, the extension of about 30 km of metre gauge railways from the Cachar district has facilitated transportation of passengers and goods upto Dharmanagar town. In addition to a goods train, three passenger trains leave Dharmanagar—two

for Silchar and one for Lumding junction of Assam. The extension of railways upto Agartala with a view to minimising the cost and trouble of carrying goods and passengers is under active consideration of the Central Government.

AIRWAY

Transport has been made easy by the starting of daily air service from Calcutta to Agartala, Khowai, Kamalpur and Kailashahar by the Indian Airlines Corporation. Calcutta is only one hour's flight from Agartala.

CONSTRUCTION OF BRIDGES

A large number of bridges and culverts of permanent and semi-permanent nature across streams and rivers have been constructed for road communication. Some of the important permanent bridges are : R.C.C. bridges over the river Howrah about 100 metres long at Agartala, over the Burma (34 5 metres) near Bishalgarh, over the Gumti (115.5 metres) at Udaipur, over the Deo (75 metres) at Kumarghat, over the Juri (36 metres) at Panisagar, over the Kalai (28.5 metres) and at Dhalal (36 metres) near Ambassa. Construction of ten bridges is going to be completed very soon and the construction of another 13 bridges has been taken up.

About seven thousand motor vehicles, most of which were of private ownership, were on road at the end of 1977. The traffic is increasing day to day. The State Transport Service with headquarters at Agartala has started functioning recently.

Postal and tele-communications have been much improved. The first Post Office in Tripura was opened at Agartala on the 1st of October, 1875. Now there are 412 post offices and 78 Telegraph Offices There were about 3,500 telephone connections and nearly a lakh radio sets in the State at the end of 1977.

Newspapers are a powerful medium of mass communication. The local press which consists of five dailies, one biweekly and 42 weeklies, is utilised for communicating to the people the decisions of the Government and other news items. They also play a vital role in moulding public opinion.

6. SOCIAL SERVICES

DURING THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE period there were very few facilities to provide medical help to the people of Tripura There were 29 dispensaries spread over the entire State and only one forty-bed hospital at Agartala. After integration, though much remains to be done, considerable progress has been made in medical help and public health. The number of hospitals has increased from one to eleven, and 27 primary health centres and 117 dispensaries have been established. We have at present 155 institutions with 1,268 beds, two ayurvedic and seven homoeopathic dispensaries in the State.

In the field of controlling communicable diseases, the national programmes for malaria eradication, smallpox eradication, T.B. control and leprosy control have been executed in the State. The majority of the T B. and leprosy patients have been brought under treatment.

With a view to utilising local talent and providing opportunity to them, various training programmes are being organised. These include auxiliary nurses training for the girls of all communities and *dhais* training specially for girls belonging to the various tribal communities. Candidates from this State are also sent for training in radiography, pharmacy, B-pharma and senior nursing. A number of boys and girls are sent to medical colleges outside Tripura for study. At present 62 medical students are drawing stipend and two students have been admitted to the M.B.B.S. course and 17 students to the pre-medical course. The family planning programme has made good progress. The district family planning bureau was started in 1967. One urban and five rural FP centres have been functioning at Agartala, Mohanpur, Jirania, Udaipur, Bishalgarh and Teliamura. All other hospitals and primary health centres are also rendering family planning services. A programme for the expansion of Govind Ballabh Hospital, Agartala and other subdivisional hospitals by additional beds, X-Ray clinics, etc. is being implemented.

At present 210 registered doctors with 182 compounders, 267 nurses and 38 *dhais* are engaged in medical services. During 1968, 4,47,013 indoor patients and 28,32,639 out-door patients were treated All the sub-divisional hospitals have been equipped with X-Ray facilities. The Govind Ballabh Hospital at Agartala has been expanded with the addition of a T.B. Ward, one psychiatric clinic with 12 temporary beds and one cancer diagnostic clinic. Treatment facilities in the remote tribal areas have also been expanded.

EDUCATION

The progress of education in Tripura has been remarkable in comparison with that of the pre-Plan period. Formerly there were just a few institutions in the State.

The number of primary schools has increased from 119 to 1531, middle and basic schools from 16 to 277 and high schools from 9 to 131. Pre-independence Tripura had no college; now there are six colleges imparting higher education to over 6,500 students. Also there are now six teachers' training institutions. Expenditure on education has increased from Rs. 190,000 to over six crore rupees. Literacy rate in Tripura has more than doubled since 1947. It has risen from 15 per cent to 31 per cent.

Hindi *prachar* centres with 30 *pracharaks* have been working for the propagation of Hindi. For developing the classical languages, 34 *Sanskrit Tols* and *Madrassas* are being given grants-in-aid, and one Government Sanskrit College has been established at Agartala.

In social education centres, training is given in poultry-keeping, cattle-rearing, weaving, tailoring, bamboo and cane works and spinning.

Financial assistance like stipends, loan-scholarships. merit scholarships, free and half-free studentships etc. are given by the State and Union Government to the meritorious, poor students and to those belonging to scheduled tribes, scheduled castes, backward communities and low-income groups. Girl students belonging to economically backward communities and studying in middle stages, are supplied with school uniforms free of cost. What is most striking is that all students are given free education upto the Class VIII.

Along with general education, physical education scheme provides facilities for games and sports, outdoor activities, excursion, cycling, hiking expeditions, etc., for developing the spirit of sportsmanship, sense of discipline and fellow-feeling among the students. The Scouts and Guides and Bratchari organisations as also the NCC—both its junior and senior divisions—are engaged in promoting discipline among the youth.

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

One Polytechnic Institute at Narsingarh with 179 students and one Engineering College with 120 students, one Craft Teachers' Training College and one Music College having 70 trainees, have been functioning satisfactorily.

To meet the demand of trained teachers in the schools. two Secondary Teachers' Training Colleges at Agartala and three Basic Training Colleges at Kakraban, Panisagar and Agartala have been set up Library services have been improved. The Central Library at Agartala with its 12 branches is engaged in spreading knowledge and eradicating adult illiteracy effectively.

Expenditure on education has been steadily increasing—Rs. 41 05 lakhs in the First Plan, Rs. 123.5 lakhs in the Second Plan and Rs. 289.7 lakhs in the Third Plan. It has now risen to Rs. 871.6 lakhs.

WELFARE OF BACKWARD CLASSES

The economic, social and educational progress of the tribal communities which constitute one-third of the total population of the State, has been remarkable during the Plan periods. The unscientific and uneconomic *Jhum* cultivation has mostly been replaced by permanent cultivation. Now 22,147 *Jhumia* families have settled in 32,135 hectares of land as permanent cultivators. 7,877 families have been rehabilitated in 69 model tribal colonies and 50 families have settled in Amarpur Pilot project. In addition 3,466 tribal families have been settled in 2,772 hectares of land and 1,538 landless scheduled caste families have been settled in 1,266 hectares of land. For providing better communication, internal roads, link roads and bridges have been constructed in the tribal areas. Tubewells and RCC wells have been constructed for the supply of drinking water.

The Tripura tribals are generally very poor and are not in a position to send their wards to school. Educational facilities like free boarding house, award of boarding house stipend, book

grants. supply of free text-books, school uniforms etc. are given to children belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Many boarding houses have been constructed. These facilities are attracting more and more students.

The backward classes are provided with housing subsidy, medical facilities, improved seeds, fertilizers, plants for horticulture, poultry, birds, pigs etc. at subsidised rates. Forty-three tribals girls have been trained as *dhais*. Financial assistance is given to the poor scheduled caste and scheduled tribe patients suffering from serious diseases such as T.B., cancer, leprosy, etc. Various schemes for financial assistance for agriculture and industrial training are being implemented for the economic upliftment of these communities Expenditure on improving the economic condition of Scheduled Tribes rose from Rs. 21 lakhs in the entire First Plan period to over Rs. 40 lakhs during 1977-78. About Rs. 11 lakhs were spent in the same year to better the lot of Scheduled Castes compared to Rs. 36,000 spent during the First Plan.

7. THE CULTURAL SCENE

FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL Shaivism has flourished in Tripura Although the three sects of Hinduism, namely, Shaiva, Vaishnava and Shakta, gradually secured their strongholds in the State, the Shiva and Shakti sects gained a prominent place over the ages. Most of the kings of Tripura, starting from Trilochana, were devoted to Shaivism. The first god among the fourteen gods of Tripura is Shiva, the god of Tantra, and Unakuti is called the Shivatirtha of Tripura. Many temples of Lord Shiva and Uma were set up by the kings throughout the state. The old coins of the state bear the emblems of the trident (the weapon of Lord Shiva) and lion (the vehicle of Shakti). From coins, temples and images engraved and rock-cut, it is evident that Shiva and Shakti worship was prevalent from very early times. The influence of Shiva, Shakti and other cults is evident even today in the worship of the images of Ganesha, Kartikeya, Lakshmi, Vani and others made of stone and other metals. The great sage Kapila is said to have lived on the river Manu and worshipped Shiva at Unakuti.

Although *Rajmala* is silent about the spread of Buddhism in Tripura, there is still strong evidence that Buddhism was widely prevalent in some areas of the State and that some of its old kings were even devout Buddhists. For generations the Maharajas have personally adopted the Vaishnava faith— although the state religion was mainly Shakti.

Though the kings of Tripura were devout and staunch Hindus, they did not close the door to Islam, Christianity and other religions. The *sunnee* sect of Islam predominates in the State. Regard for *Pirs* and *Fakirs,* rentfree land grants in their favour and Mosques spread throughout the state prove the patronage of Islam by the rulers. The fruitful efforts of the Christian missionaries to convert the simple Hindu tribals, approaching them through their local dialects and giving them special privileges, also found their place in Tripura. The Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims, and Christians, all enjoy equal rights and privileges. The State has 13,93,698 Hindus, 10,392 Muslims, 42,285 Buddhists, 15,713 Christians, 375 Jains and

318 Sikhs. The Hindu sacred places like Udaipur, Unakuti, Trithamukh and old Agartala and the celebrations of *Kei*, *Kharchupuja*, *Diwali*, *Asokastami*, and other festivals have made Tripura a land of spiritual importance

SCULPTURE AND ARCHITECTURE

The sculpture and architecture of Tripura have been much influenced by the religion and culture of ancient India. Most of the temples are of Nagar pattern of architecture. The huge but crude rock-cut images and the finer sculpture images of the Unakuti were the works of the people over some centuries. The temples of Ambulinga Bhairava of Chhatrabhog, the Sayambhunath Siva temple at Chandranath (now in Bangladesh), and those of the Tripura Sundari, Tripuresh Bhairaba, Lakshminarayan, Jagannath Deb, the Buddhadeb of Agartala and fourteen gods of old Agartala bear testimony to the fine and skilful architecture. The rare collections of art, architecture and sculpture of the State are being preserved in the Museum of the Government of Tripura.

LITERATURE AND ART

The art and literature of Tripura have been influenced by those of Bengal. Sanskrit had vast influence and the original *Rajmala* and some inscriptions were composed in that language. The great king Dharma Manikya (1431-1432 A D) engaged some scholars and royal priests named Dhurlabhandra, Sukreswar and Vaneswar for compiling *Rajmala* as a "Verse chronicle" of Tripura in Bengali. Maharaj Dhanya Manikya, Bir Chandra Manikya, Radhakishore Manikya, and Bir Bikram Manikya were great patrons of art and literature.

The Maharajas of Tripura patronised great scholars, litterateurs and educational establishments by giving scholarships, donations as monthly and annual grants. It was with the financial help of Maharaja Bir Chandra Manikya that Pandit Ramnarayan Vidyaratna, in 1890, edited eight big volumes of *Srimad Bhagwat* Dr Dinesh Ch. Sen published his '*Bangabhasha-o-sahitya* and *Brihat Vanga* Pandit Chandroday Vidya Binode re-edited the *Rajmala* and *Brihanheradiya puran* and published books on the inscriptions of Tripura by the munificence of the Tripura Darbar. Tagore got the themes for his drama. *Rajarshi* and *Bisarjan*, from the story of Maharaja Gobinda Manikya of Tripura which is described in *Rajmala* and *Rajratnakar*.

After Independence many scholars, writers and artists have engaged themselves in bringing about a change in the sphere of art and literature to suit the modern times. Only time will ultimately decide their worth. Many journals and magazines continue to promote art and literature through the creative, thought-provoking and impressive writings of renowned writers. Of these, *Bratati, Uditi, Nabagata, Mitali, Paramanu, Janaki, Tripura, Nandimukh, Paunami, Hal, Samakal, Swapna-o-Duswapna,* and the literary section of the *Samachar Dainik Sambad, Jagaran, Ganaraj, Tripura Times, Rudrabina, Manus,* and the *Tribeg* are worth mentioning.

Partha Pratim Ray, Chinmay Ray, Sumangal Sen, Paritosh Saha, Nelini Mazumdar, Bimal Kar, Prasanta Sengupta and others have enriched life, society and nature through their exquisite paintings. An Academy of Fine Arts is going to be established in near future by the Government for encouraging the artists in these creative fields.

MUSIC. DANCE AND DRAMA

The origin and development of music, dance and drama in Tripura is shrouded in mystery. The folk-songs and folk-dances of the different tribes existed even in days of yore as these were an inseparable part of their way of life. Their pujas and festivals are followed by community songs in indigenous tunes and dances of different graceful styles. Songs are sung jointly by men and women and are followed by recitals and flutes and the sound of trumpets. The traditional folk-songs and folk-dances of Tripura have earned reputation in the past two decades. Classical music was started in Tripura during the reign of Maharaj Birchandra Manikya Bahadur who was a famous vocal and instrumental musician. His court was the best place for cultivation of classical music and was graced by great vocal and instrumental musicians and dramatists of the time. The royal family was a great patron of music, dance and drama from the distant past. Sachin Deb Barman a renowned musician of the country, was from the royal family of Tripura.

The cultivation of music, dance and drama has received a fillip after Independence from the Government, Music College, Sangeet Bharati and some other private institutions. Classical songs, devotional songs, Bhatiyali Palligiti Namkirtan, Pala, Kirtan, Kabigan, Padabali, Nazrul Geeti, Rabindra Sangeet, etc are sung all over the State. Sri Rabi Nag, Late Pulin Deb barman,

Utpal Deb Barman, Birendra Ray, Ranjit Ghosh, Nabadwip Debnath, Salil Deb barman, Bhupesh Banik and Aswini Kumar Sarma are masters in their own sphere of instrumental or vocal music. Some cultural institutions like North Tripura Cultural Organisation, Tripura Sangeet Chakra, Rupam, Rangam, Sipli Sangsad and Lokaranjan Shakha of the Publicity Department arrange for staging various social, historical, religious, mythological and satirical dramas throughout the year. Some of the actors and actresses have captivated audience all over the State. The tribal folk-dance, Raas Lila dance and Rakhal dance of the Manipuri community make the audience spell-bound for hours together. Sri Bihar Sinha, Narottam Sinha and Ananta Deb Barman have achieved eminence in dance within the State and outside.

Many other artists of various schools and colleges are engaged in promotion of music, dance and drama in the State. The radio station at Agartala broadcasts local programmes of music and drama and relays programmes of different radio stations in the country.

FOLKLORE

The rich and varied folklore of the tribals of Tripura passes orally from generation to generation. The 'Kak Barak Sahitya Sabha' and the Education Department of the Government are trying to publish the folk literature of the tribals The folkfore is connected with their rulers, myths, marriage, child-birth and occupation and trades. The Story of King Subraj (Trilochana), who introduced cotton cultivation and desired to introduce 360 new designs in textiles in the State, is still popular in tribal homes. The legendary stories of 'Wakjarah-Fa' (The pig), Takshichani Kereng Kathma (punishment of the sinner), the river Gumti, Lautauk, Takraja (king-bird) etc. have much bearing on the spiritual and social life of the different tribes.

NATIONAL OUTLOOK

Tripura by its rich tradition and culture has always promoted national unity and integrity. The cultural ties which were built between the Maharajas of Tripura and the then scholars, men of letters and great artists of British India, fostered mutual understanding, goodwill, friendship and exchange of thought and culture and thus created a mental and spiritual relationship with the other parts of India.

Although Tripura is inhabited by people of different races and tribes, languages and religions, cultures and traditions, they are still immune from separatist tendencies like provincialism or parochialism or communalism. They have indeed translated into reality the Indian concept of 'unity in diversity'. They stood solidly with their compatriots during national crises like the Sino-Indian conflict 1962, Indo-Pak conflicts and the liberation struggle of Bangladesh.

The leaders of all religions are equally respected by all. The shrines and sacred places of all religions are venerated by all and the people have devotional contacts with places of pilgrimage in the country and commercial contacts with many States. The State has provided employment to thousands of people from other States and has sheltered many from outside, especially the influx of Bengalees, Chakmas, Kukies, Khasias and others. The national days are observed in a befitting manner and national leaders are paid due homage.

8. PLACES OF INTEREST

THERE ARE QUITE a few places of historical, tourist and developmental interest in Tripura.

Agartala, the capital of Tripura, is a historic town with beautiful natural scenery and ancient monuments. The Ujjayanta Palace, with its unparalleled beauty enhanced by two large tanks in the front with Moghul gardens in the intervening space, is most attractive to the visitors. The main palace with its adjacent buildings and compound covers an area of half a square mile. The palace is a synthesis of different architectural patterns—principally Roman and Indian. The decorative temples of Lakshminarayan, the Uma-Maheswar and the Venuban Bihar, the palace of Kunjaban on a small hillock, Maharaja Bir Bikram College on the lake represent the art and architecture of the land.

The Temple of Fourteen Gods at old Agartala, about 81 km. from the capital town, is a place of historical interest. It is claimed that King Trilochana installed the 14 gods and goddesses which have been brought to Agartala from Udaipur, the old capital of Tripura for centuries. During the month of July, every year, a week-long celebration known as 'Kharchipuja' is held in the temple premises and thousands of devotees, both tribals and non-tribals, attend the puja. Sacrifice of a large number of goats is a special feature of the festival.

Matabari or the temple of Tripura Sundari, situated on a small hillock of arresting natural beauty at Udaipur, about 52 km. from Agartala, is one of the 52 *Pithasthans* (sacred places) of India. It is said that the right leg of Sati or Parvati was dropped at Udaipur Tripura Sundari, the presiding goddess of the land, is worshipped here by thousands of pilgrims during the whole year and specially during the Diwali. This temple representing ancient architecture was set up by Maharaj Danya Manikya in 1501 A.D.

The temple of the Lord Jagannath at Udaipur, constructed by Jagannath Roy, King Govinda Manikya's brother, in 1528

A.D., is still attractive to the visitors. The images installed here were removed during Moghul invasions. In the same compound the images of Lord Jagannath, Subhadra and Balarama are now worshipped and it is said that these images were brought by a maharaja from Srikshetra (Puri).

The vast tank of Amarsagar of Udaipur is in the shape of a miniature sea. It was constructed by the famous King Amar Manikya in 1584 A.D. to commemorate his reign. With all these beauty spots and lovely natural sights Udaipur has become an important place of tourist interest. The main objects of interest here are the innumerable old temples, the old palace and the number of big old tanks.

Unakuti, a sacred place of Kailashahar sub-division, is about 160 km from Agartala and is approachable by road. The innumerable images of gods and goddesses and other figures carved on hilly rocks representing the ancient sculpture of the state are still fascinating to the historians. Although the exact dates of these engraved sculptures still remain unascertained some of them are dated back even to the Buddhist period. A big fair is held every year during "Asokasthami" when thousands of Hindu pilgrims assemble to take a holy dip in the adjacent "Brahma Kunda" and offer puja to Shivá, Umá, Ganesha and the 'Vishnupada' (feet of Vishnu). The images of Siva-Parvati, Brahma and Ganapati are engraved on huge rocks. This place is said to have been the Shivatirtha of Tripura and has been taken up for preservation by the Archaeological Survey of India.

The palace Nirmahal is one of the finest beauty spots of the State. It is in the Sonamura sub-division and is situated at a distance of about 53 km. from Agartala. The palace with its incomparable beauty amidst the vast lake Rudrasagar presents a marvel in art and architecture.

Tirtha Mukh, a sacred place with its beautiful natural scenery, in the Amarpur sub-division is about 117 km. from Agartala. Thousands of people from all corners of Tripura assemble here every year on the occasion of *Paus Sankranti* to have a holy dip in the small lake which is the source of the river Gumti and is known as 'Tirtha Mukh'.

OTHER TOURIST SPOTS

The deer-park of Sepahijola, set up by the Forest Department of the State, with a picnic spot nearby, is a place of intense interest to visitors.

The Betalong Shiv, top of the Jampat Hill range, about 900 metres high with its temperate climate and covered with ever-green forests and studded with golden orange groves is a magnificent place in all seasons the like of which is not to be seen anywhere else in this part of the country. The ever-flowing spring on the hill-top with its grand natural scenery is most attractive to the visitors.

Baramura, on the Assam-Agartala road approachable by roadway from Agartala, on the Barmura hill ranges, is fast becoming an important industrial centre of the State. The first oil-drilling operation in the State has been started here by the Oil and Natural Gas Commission. It promises to usher in a new era of prosperity for Tripura.

The Dumbur Falls is the source of river Gumti referred to in Tagore's famous lyric drama *'Bisarjjan'* (*sacrifice*). The beautiful scenery of the picturesque hills and green forests attracts the visitors. The continuous splashing of water of the falls creating a white foamy symphony is of absorbing interest. It is the place where the first hydro-electric project of the State has been completed.

TRAVEL FACILITIES

The capital town Agartala is approachable from Calcutta and Gauhati by air. Three sub-divisional towns—Kailashahar, Kamalpur and Khewai—are connected by daily air service with Calcutta via Agartala. Agartala is only one hour's journey from Calcutta and the last station, Kailashahar, can be reached in half an hour from Agartala by air.

The nearest railway station, Dharmanagar, situated in the northern district of the State has been connected by N.E. Railway and is approachable by train from Calcutta via Gauhati, Lunding, Badarpur and Karimganj junction.

Agartala has been connected with Assam by the national highway, namely, the Assam-Agartala road. Buses, taxies, jeeps ply between Agartala and Karimganj and Agartala and Dharmanagar in all seasons. Regular bus service from Agartala to all important places such as Udaipur, Belonia, Sabroom, Amarpur, Teliamura, Khewai, Karimganj, Kailashahar, old Agartala and Sunamura is available.

Tourist lodges will be shortly constructed at Agartala, Unakuti and Deotanura, providing modern amenities. There are hotels in Agartala for the accommodation of tourists.

Tripura, the State of great antiquity, a land of charming natural beauty, having many tribal and non-tribal communities with their tradition in music, dance and hospitality, has ever been fascinating visitors from near and far.

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